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ROCARD'S STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT

SUMMARY

1. ROCARD ANNOUNCED HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME ON 29 JUNE. IT REITERATES COMMITMENTS MADE BY MITTERRAND DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN TO REINTRODUCE THE WEALTH TAX, TO A MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME, AND TO INCREASE AID TO THE THIRD WORLD. THE SPEECH IS STRIKING FOR ITS EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL ISSUES, AND FOR ITS MODERATE TONE. BOTH SHOULD APPEAL TO THE CENTRISTS WHOM ROCARD HOPES WILL BE INCREASINGLY DISPOSED TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

DETAIL

2. ROCARD PRESENTED HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME TO THE ASSEMBLY ON 29 JUNE. TAKING THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO ALL THE FRENCH (MY TELNO 340) AS HIS POINT OF REFERENCE, HE GAVE THE FOLLOWING COMMITMENTS:-

(I) NEW CALEDONIA: THERE WILL BE A NATIONAL REFERENDUM THIS AUTUMN ON THE AGREEMENT WORKED OUT WITH TJIBAOU AND LAFLEUR (MY TELNO 657, NOT TO ALL).

(II) THE CITIES: AN INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE IS TO BE SET UP TO COORDINATE ACTION TO TACKLE URBAN PROBLEMS.

(III) MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME: AN INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE WILL SUPERVISE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME AND WILL REVIEW THE SCHEME IN THREE YEARS TIME.

(IV) PRESCRIPTION CHARGES: THESE WILL AGAIN BE REIMBURSED IN FULL, AS THEY WERE BEFORE THE CHIRAC GOVERNMENT.

(V) WEALTH TAX: THE GOVERNMENT WILL ANNOUNCE ITS PROPOSAL FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF A WEALTH TAX ON 13 JULY, FOR DEBATE IN THE ASSEMBLY DURING THE AUTUMN BUDGET SESSION.

(VI) 1992: EACH PROFESSION THAT WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SINGLE MARKET IS INVITED TO LET THE PRIME MINISTER HAVE A

LIST OF ITS CONCERNS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR.

(VII) OVERSEAS AID: NEW IMPETUS MUST BE GIVEN TO REACHING THE 0.7 PERCENT TARGET FOR OVERSEAS AID. A QUOTE FRENCH DEVELOPMENT CORPS UNQUOTE IS TO BE SET UP TO HELP DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

(VIII) BROADCASTING: THE CNCL WILL BE ABOLISHED AND REPLACED BY A BROADCASTING COUNCIL WHOSE ROLE WILL BE ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION.

(IX) THE ECONOMY: THE GOVERNMENT WILL PURSUE RIGOROUS ECONOMIC POLICIES AS THE ROUTE TO STRONGER GROWTH. (THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE COMMITMENT ALREADY ANNOUNCED TO REDUCE THE BUDGET DEFICIT.)

3. ROCARD'S SPEECH SETS THE AGENDA AND THE TONE FOR HIS ADMINISTRATION. IT IS STRIKING ON THREE COUNTS:

(I) THE EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS: THIS IS AN AREA OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO ROCARD. HE INSISTED ON THE NEED TO TACKLE SUCH PROBLEMS AS BROKEN LIFTS IN COUNCIL FLATS AND FLANKING WALLS IN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS, IF GOVERNMENT WAS TO GIVE QUOTE NEW HOPE UNQUOTE (A LEITMOTIV RUNNING THROUGH THE SPEECH) TO A QUOTE CIVIL SOCIETY UNQUOTE INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED BY WHAT APPEARED TO BE QUOTE POLITICAL SOCIETY'S UNQUOTE INDIFFERENCE TO EVERYDAY ISSUES. ROCARD BELIEVES (AND MITTERRAND MAY WELL DO SO TOO) THAT IT IS AT THIS MICRO-LEVEL THAT MEASURES MUST BE TAKEN TO ATTRACT ELECTORS WHO HAVE BEEN TAKING REFUGE IN ABSTENTION OR IN A VOTE FOR THE FRONT NATIONAL.

(II) THE MODERATE TONE: ROCARD INSISTED ON THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION. HE AVOIDED POLEMICS AND ADOPTED A TONE OF STUDIED REASONABLENESS. BY INSISTING ON THE NEED FOR DEBATE AND REFLECTION RATHER THAN DOGMATIC LEFT/RIGHT HOSTILITIES, HE WAS DOING ALL HE COULD TO CREATE THE CLIMATE FOR QUOTE OUVERTURE UNQUOTE (POLITICAL OPENING). BUT HE HAS TO PAY SOME PRICE TO KEEP HIS OWN LEFT ON BOARD. HE HAS A DIFFICULT JUGGLING ACT AHEAD.

(III) THE APPEAL TO THE CENTRE: HIS COMMITMENTS, AND THE TONE IN WHICH THEY WERE DELIVERED, WERE DESIGNED TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE CENTRISTS IN MEHAIGNERIE'S UDC (UNION DU CENTRE) (THOUGH AT SOME RISK, AS IS ALREADY CLEAR, TO SUPPORT FROM MAINSTREAM SOCIALISTS). ROCARD DWELT AT LENGTH ON THE RECENT NEW CALEDONIA NEGOTIATION, WITH WHICH THE BARRISTES WERE ASSOCIATED, AS A SYMBOL OF THE RECONCILIATION AND COOPERATION WHICH HE WANTS TO PROMOTE THROUGHOUT

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FRENCH SOCIETY. HE WILL HAVE TAKEN ENCOURAGEMENT FROM MEHAIGNERIE'S
REPLY ON BEHALF OF THE UDC IN WHICH HE SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HIS GROUP
WAS IN THE OPPOSITION, THAT WOULD NOT PREVENT IT FROM WORKING WITH
THE MAJORITY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY.

CONCLUSION

4. ROCARD'S SECOND GOVERNMENT (MY TELNO 660 AND 661) AND HIS
STATEMENT TO THE ASSEMBLY TAKE THE OVERTURE PROCESS ANOTHER STAGE.
HIS AIM NOW WILL BE TO PUT FORWARD PROPOSALS IN THE AUTUMN SESSION
OF PARLIAMENT WHICH WILL ATTRACT THE SUPPORT OF THE UDC AS WELL AS
THE SOCIALISTS. SUCCESS THEN WILL ENHANCE THE CHANCES OF INCREASED
SOCIALIST-UDC COOPERATION AND OF EVENTUAL CENTRE-LEFT COALITION
GOVERNMENT. FAILURE WILL REDUCE THE PROSPECTS OF SUCH A COALITION,
AND GLADDEN THOSE ON THE RIGHT, AS WELL AS SOME IN THE SOCIALIST
PARTY, WHO ARE HOSTILE TO OVERTURE.

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